

THE BHUTAN SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

Number 35

President: Lord Wilson of Tillyorn, KT GCMG FRSE

Autumn 2006

Monday 30th October, 2006

Insights into Life & Healthcare in Bhutan

An amusing illustrated talk in non-medical jargon!

By Prof. John Duncan

John Duncan is a Professor of Neurology (UCL), specialising in epilepsy. The most common serious disorder of the brain, epilepsy is nevertheless often not recognised or treated. This is particularly the case in Bhutan, which currently has no neurologists of its own.

In November 2005, under the auspices of the Bhutanese Ministry of Health, Prof. Duncan was invited to visit Bhutan to see epilepsy patients and to teach and advise on developing a treatment programme. He was shown around a number of hospitals and health centres and had the opportunity to visit patients in their homes.

Prof. Duncan kept an audio diary during his trip and has an array of interesting photos. He is an excellent and witty speaker with years of experience in the field!

John Duncan is a Professor of Neurology at the Institute of Neurology, University College London (www.ion.ucl.ac.uk), and the National Hospital for Neurology & Neurosurgery. He is also Medical Director of the National Society for Epilepsy (www.epilepsynse.org.uk) and the President (UK Chapter) of the International League against Epilepsy.

Monday 30th October, 2006

6:30pm for 7:00pm

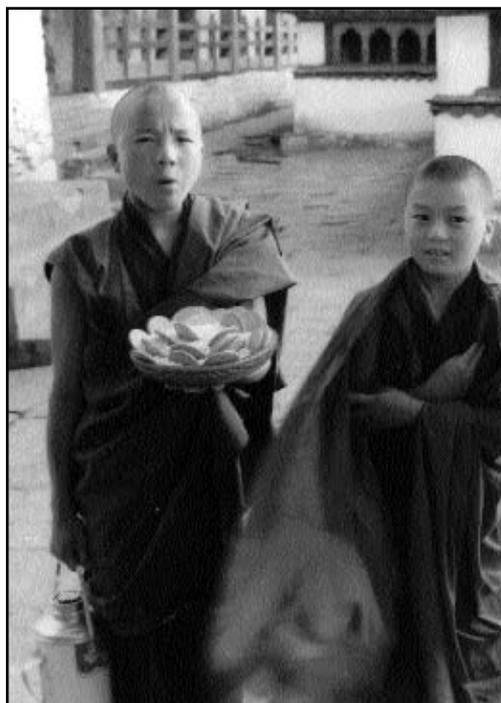
**The National Liberal Club
Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2HE**

**An Exhibition of Photographs
by Almerie Colloredo and Peter Spira**

IMAGES OF BHUTAN

Private View: 16th October 2006 at 6:30pm

(See page 2 for details)



The Society's 14th Annual Dinner

The 14th Annual Dinner of the Bhutan Society took place on Friday 15th September, 2006, in the Peers' Dining Room, House of Lords.

Our President, Lord Wilson of Tillyorn, presided, and 80 Members and friends of Bhutan were joined by nine Bhutanese guests, most of whom are currently studying in the UK. The Society would particularly like to thank those Members who generously sponsored tickets for the Bhutanese students to attend – it is greatly appreciated.

The Society's website is at www.bhutansociety.org and carries information about the Society, news and events, an archive of Newsletters and a selection of interesting Bhutan-related links.

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For membership enquiries please see the Society's website, or contact the Membership Secretary, Mrs. Elizabeth Lee
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News & Updates from the Bhutan Society



IMAGES OF BHUTAN

The Director, The Nehru Centre

cordially invites Members and friends of the Bhutan Society to a **Private Viewing** on **Monday 16th October 2006 at 6:30pm**
(Exhibition continues 17th-20th October)

We are delighted that the Exhibition will be opened by a great friend of Bhutan, Viscount Lascelles. The Official Opening will be followed at 7:15pm by an illustrated talk, "The Building of the Harewood Stupa". The stupa, the only one of its kind in the UK, stands in the grounds of Harewood House, Yorkshire.

Wine and snacks will be served.

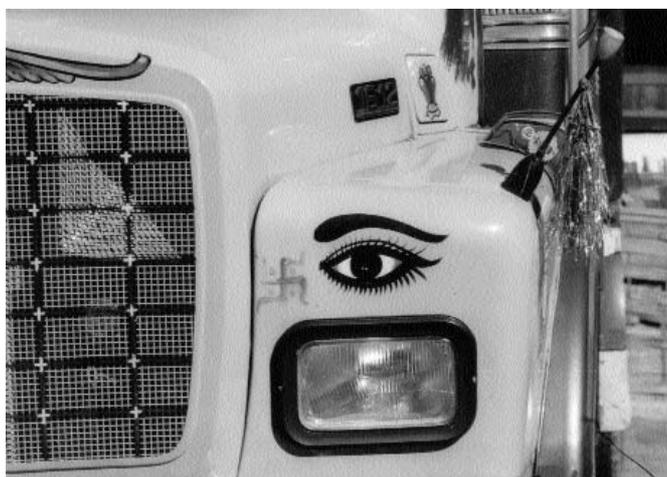
The Nehru Centre
8 South Audley Street, London W1K 1HF

Purchasing Photographs – IMPORTANT

All photos in the exhibition will be for sale, priced at £50, with all proceeds donated to the Bhutan Society Trust Fund. However, due to Indian High Commission regulations, we will be unable to accept any payments (cash or cheques) on the Nehru Centre premises. Instead, photographs may be reserved and a cheque forwarded by post (reservation forms and payment instructions will be available at the exhibition). Photographs will be dispatched from 21st October, upon receipt of payment.

The Photographers

Almerie Colloredo and Peter Spira were both introduced to Bhutan by Baroness Dorothea Friesen who guides frequent tours to Bhutan and is the organiser of this exhibition.



'The Eye of the Traveller' by Almerie Colloredo

The Fourth International Conference of European Bhutan Societies

Stockholm, August 25-27, 2006

by John Davey

The Conference was formally inaugurated by HE Mr. Sonam T. Rabgye, Ambassador of Bhutan in Geneva, on Friday 25th August at 5.30pm at the Swedish Museum of Ethnography. Delegates first viewed an exhibition entitled 'Bhutan: Kingdom of Castles and Monasteries' – an excellent collection of *thangkas*, textiles and artefacts from Bhutan. This was followed by a delightful reception.

The following morning the one-day Conference of the various European Bhutan Societies (13 of them!) commenced, the Chairman being Mr. Arne Georgzen, the President of the Swedish Bhutan Society. A representative from each Society spoke briefly about their background and aims and outlined the events which have occurred in the last two years and also mentioned future plans. Each speaker was open to questions. It was most interesting to hear about the other Societies as to age, membership numbers and the help and assistance they are giving to various agencies and organisations in Bhutan. Later in the morning, HE The Ambassador talked about recent political and economic developments in Bhutan.

After a light luncheon Dr. Françoise Pommaret, from Les Amis du Bhoutan, gave a most interesting and very frank account of tourism in Bhutan as it is now and with the current inherent problems. A very lively discussion followed with comments made, and questions asked, not only by the Representatives themselves but also by other members and attendees. All members found this discussion very compelling and it showed, in no superficial manner, the concerns of all Society Representatives about the future of tourism in Bhutan.

The Conference concluded with an invitation, which was accepted unanimously, from the German Society to meet again in Stuttgart in 2008.

The delegates then visited Ulriksdal Castle and park, where we had an inspiring guided tour with a visit to the Chapel and the extensive greenhouses and flower garden. With waves of flowers in sight we enjoyed a delicious meal during which friendships were made or further cemented. The day ended with a short farewell speech from HE The Ambassador.

The Conference was meticulously planned and executed and was an interesting, beneficial and positive occasion for all delegates. I would like to thank Mr. Arne Georgzen, President of the Swedish Bhutan Society, and all his team, for superbly organising such an informative, welcoming and friendly Conference.



Michael Rutland receives OBE

The British High Commissioner to India, Sir Michael Arthur, conferred the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire on Michael Rutland on behalf of Queen Elizabeth II at a ceremony in Thimphu on 5th September.

Michael, who is the Honorary Consul of Bhutan to the United Kingdom (and also, of course, the Hon. Secretary of the Bhutan Society), was presented with the honour in recognition of his contributions towards strengthening relations between Bhutan and the United Kingdom.



Sir Michael Arthur, British High Commissioner to India, presents Michael Rutland with the OBE

The High Commissioner's party included Lady Arthur, Brigadier Clive Elderton (British Military and Defence Advisor) and Mrs Elderton, Simon Wilson (British Deputy High Commissioner Eastern India) and Mr. Mainak De, Press and Information Attache.

The investiture ceremony was graced by the presence of Their Majesties The Queens Ashi Dorji Wangmo, Ashi Tshering Yangden, and Ashi Sangay Choden, Their Royal Highnesses Prince Jigyel and Prince Khamsum, HE The Prime Minister and members of the Cabinet and HE The Chief Justice of Bhutan as well as almost a hundred of Michael's friends and family in Bhutan.

After the ceremony, a reception was held on the lawns of the Royal Banquet Hall, and this was followed by an Audience with His Majesty The King.

The Hon. Secretary Michael Rutland is currently in Bhutan. He plans to return to the UK around June 2007. He would be delighted to meet Members visiting Bhutan during the periods when he is there – telephone him when you are in Thimphu.

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His Majesty receives Conservation Award

Kuensel, August 2006

His Majesty the King has received the 2006 J. Paul Getty Conservation Leadership Award in recognition of His Majesty's leadership and deep concern for the environment.

According to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), His Majesty's leadership has resulted "in the establishment of government policies and laws that have substantial positive impact on conservation and help ensure environmental sustainability in Bhutan, and by example globally as well".

In his acceptance letter His Majesty declared that "this award belongs to the government and the people of Bhutan and not to any one individual, for we have all worked together to conserve our environment".

The award includes US\$ 200,000 for establishing a fellowship programme to support Bhutanese studying in conservation related fields in Bhutan.

Bhutanese English language skills poor?

Kuensel, August 2006

That Bhutanese in general have good command of the English language may be more myth than reality. At least this is the finding of Bhutan Business Solutions, a private firm which wants to employ 80 Bhutanese to start a medical transcription service.

Medical transcription involves transcribing digital audio files sent over the Internet by doctors from abroad (largely the USA). Tests for the interviewees included essay writing, grammar, comprehension, listening skills and an oral interview. But of more than 500 graduates and Class 12 students interviewed, only 39 got through the selection interview to train for the job. The firm needs 80 people to be trained for six months to become certified medical transcriptionists.

Several interviewees suggested that Bhutan Business Solutions' selection procedures were too stringent, but Damchae Dem, head of the project and MD of Bhutan Steel Industries Ltd., countered that interviews couldn't be easy given the high standards required by C-Bay, the medical transcription distributor in the USA. Medical transcription is a highly specialised profession with 2% being the acceptable percentage of error in the transcriptions. The transcripts then go through a process of cleaning.

Damchae Dem said that a joint effort from the government and other organisations to raise English standards was important because the project has "much promise for employment opportunities". India has already established 37 transcription centres.



Bhutan Connections



“A report on my research trip to England” by Tshering Tashi

The background to my trip

For the last year or so, I have been researching a book that I am co-authoring with the former Australian Deputy Prime Minister, H.E. Tim Fischer. The book's provisional title is *Beckoning, Bold Bhutan: Absorbing Gross National Happiness, Heaven on Earth*. It is to be published by Allen and Unwin in 2008 to coincide with celebrations of the centenary of the monarchy, the coronation of the 5th King and the introduction of constitutional democracy. During my research in Bhutan, I quickly learnt about the India Office Library and was thrilled to have the chance to visit it. This is a brief account of my trip.

My research

The bulk of my time in London was spent in the India Office of the British Library (BL), which I visited religiously every single weekday. Initially not even concerts in Hyde Park could distract me. The BL was the most exciting place for me and I was amazed how old manuscripts, private papers, reports etc. are meticulously filed and carefully preserved. What impressed me most was not only the accessibility to the public, but also the staff's eagerness to help and the pride they take in ensuring that every source of information is made available to readers.

Most of my weekends were spent visiting the children and grandchildren of the Political Officers who visited Bhutan in the early 1900s. The Political Officers resided in Gangtok and made frequent trips to Bhutan and its neighbours. These trips were long, arduous ones entailing huge logistic operations; some trips had to be made at difficult times of year due to political reasons. Diaries were maintained in spite of difficult situations faced on a daily basis. I watched some amazing footage of Bhutan in the early 1900s, painfully filmed at their own expense by family members and companions of the Political Officers who often seized the opportunity to travel to Bhutan. In spite of all the hardships none of the travellers recorded any complaints. In fact they could not find sufficient adjectives to describe the beauty of the people and the country and were full of praise for the Monarch's detailed and thoughtful hospitality.

I amassed enough interesting data to enable me to write a decent book and my confidence in this book project has grown ever since.

Visiting the Political Officers' descendants

The descendants of these 'deities' (as Joanna Lumley refers to her grandfather Col. Weir who was one such Political Officer), were thrilled with my visit as they got updates on Bhutan. Their houses often have display areas for Bhutanese artefacts and albums with cuttings of Bhutanese news in the English media.

It was most interesting for me to meet people in their old age (ages I learnt are 'state secrets'!) living so independently yet such content lives. I also admire the

value placed on tradition, loyalty and moral values. Many of these people spend a lot of time in their gardens and have every reason to be proud of them. They live healthy lives but some of them drove faster than I will ever in my life! They are at times naughty and indulge in scotch that never seems to finish. Amongst those I visited were some with close association with the Bhutanese Royal Family.

The openness, kindness and warmth with which I was received is an indication of these people's sentiments about Bhutan and an indicator of healthy relations between the people of the two countries.

Impressions of London and beyond

My travels took me in all directions and I soon became acquainted with the British rail system. I also had the chance to experience some of the hottest summer days underground with tube trains running late. I took comfort in the knowledge that the tube systems were built 150 years ago and that safety takes precedence over comfort.

London is living history and my initial focus soon started to weaken. I visited the British Museum, the Imperial War Museum, the Tate etc. Also the Pitt Rivers Museum, the Royal Geographical Society, Stonehenge and Chester. I climbed the Welsh mountain Y Garn – the Bhutanese record now stands at 53 minutes (it would have been better had I known we were being timed!). I was told that my trip would not be complete without a visit to the Royal Albert Hall where I attended the Proms and visits to Oxford and Cambridge universities. I was inspired by these institutes of learning that produce Nobel prize winners and hope some day to attend courses in these universities.

Bhutan does not have diplomatic relations with the UK in spite of the long relationship, so it was most heartening to see the role of the Bhutan Society in fostering people-to-people relationships. It is clear that the ties between England and Bhutan will endure for generations.

All in all my trip to England has been a dream come true; an education and historical journey. I would like to acknowledge my sincere gratitude to the following people without whose support and guidance my trip would have just remained a dream:

Michael Rutland, Dr. Karma Phuntsho, Aum Rebecca Pradhan, Sir Simon & Lady Caroline Bowes Lyon who graciously allowed me to use Morpeth Mansions (the unofficial 'Bhutan House'), Maybe Jehu, Roger Crosten, Isabelle, Manwell, Deki, Nicholas & John Jigme Rhodes, Anthony & Marie Aris, Clare Harris, Joceylne Dudding, Caroline & Patrick Willis, Malcolm & Rosamunde Lyell, Dick & Erica Gould, Diana & David Kruger, the Bailey Brothers, Michael & Virginia Collett, Richard Southby, Burkhard Quessel, Steve Brace, Andrew Sutton, Lord Wilson, David Lyon, Scott & Debroah Steedman, Kuenga Wangmo, Thinley Dema, Choeki & Naomi, Karma Tshering, Karma, Rinchen, Ugyen and all the staff of the India office at the BL.